

## COUNCIL PRE-MEETING

Tuesday, September 21, 2021 5:00 p.m.  
Casper City Hall - Council Chambers

### AGENDA

1. Wyoming Community Development Authority (WCDA) Community Development Block Grant-funded (CDBG) Neighborhood Development Program Presentations
  - Wyoming Food for Thought
  - Casper Housing Authority
  - Erin Marquez
2. Employee Vaccination Incentives
3. Introduction of New Employees
  - Clerk of Municipal Court, Nicole Hatfield
  - Parks, Recreation & Public Facilities Director, Zulima Lopez

Mayor Freel began the pre-meeting session at 5:13 p.m. with Councilmembers Gamroth, Knell, and Mayor Freel in attendance. Joining the meeting later were Councilmembers Engebretsen, Johnson and Vice Mayor Pacheco. Absent Councilmembers Cathey and Pollock.

Mayor Freel began the meeting by explaining that groups requesting City sponsorship of applications for the Wyoming Community Development Authority (WCDA) Community Development Block Grant-funded (CDBG) Neighborhood Development program would be given ten minutes to present a summary of their request for funding.

Jamie Purcell, Executive Director of the Wyoming Food for Thought Project, introduced herself and provided information on the proposal for an urban food center at site of the former Roosevelt High School building. She explained that the organization has outgrown its current facility and wishes to expand services in the North Casper neighborhood. She further explained what services would be available at the new facility.

Councilmember Gamroth thanked Ms. Purcell for the tour of the facility. Mayor Freel asked what a shared use kitchen involves, which Ms. Purcell explained. Councilmember Knell thanked Ms. Purcell for the tour of the facility he attended and requested additional information on the projected income for the shared use and rentable office space in the new facility. Ms. Purcell described the proposed uses for the empty second floor space. City Manager Napier asked how the group intended to meet the 5% match requirement for the program. Ms. Purcell shared that the sale of the old facility would more than cover the matching component. Councilmember Knell asked about the 5-10% administration fee. City Manager Napier indicated that the administration fee would depend upon the number of applications and the demand on staff.

Next Kim Summerall-Wright, Executive Director of the Casper Housing Authority (CHA), shared detailed information about their proposed project for the use of the former Willard School building. She provided information on programs and services the new location would offer the community. She also described the extensive project management experience of the CHA.

Councilmembers Knell and Gamroth thanked Ms. Summerall-Wright for the facility tour. City Manager Napier asked how the group intended to meet the match requirement for the program. Ms. Summerall-Wright indicated the group has the majority of the whole project funded, so the matching funds will not be an issue.

Then, Erin Marquez presented her proposal to renovate the building at 100 North Center Street for transitional housing, limited food service, COVID/isolation rooms, and office space. She also explained the costs associated with the project.

Councilmember Gamroth asked about Ms. Marquez's experience with large projects and federal grants. She indicated that a project of this size would be new to her, but the board managing the project and other staff would work as a team on the project. Councilmember Engebretsen asked if there would be enough parking at the site. Ms. Marquez indicated that often people in transitional housing or those who need medical isolation rather than staying in a shelter use public transportation rather than personal vehicles, so the parking available will be adequate. Councilmember Engebretsen asked if this facility would offer assisted living. Ms. Marquez stated that the housing would be transitional and offer temporary isolation rooms, not assisted living. Councilmember Knell asked how long it would take before the facility could be operational. Ms. Marquez stated that it would have three phases and occupancy would begin in 2023. Councilmember Knell shared his concern that this proposal seems preliminary. Ms. Marquez shared that the original plan was designed for a different facility and had to be adapted quickly to meet the WCDA CDBG application timeline. City Manager Napier offered caution to Council and recommended that they consider if capitalization for this project is at hand prior to entering into a sub-recipient relationship. Mayor Freel thanked the applicant for being forward thinking especially regarding the isolation space.

City Manager Napier then shared that the WCDA CDBG item would come before Council as a public hearing item and that because of timing constraints, a vote is needed this evening. He added that the administrative piece and matching requirement are critical elements when Council considers the proposals before them. He stated that Council would have an opportunity to discuss the proposals prior to voting this evening.

Mayor Freel moved on to the voluntary employee vaccination item. City Manager Napier provided detailed information on the staffing issues as a result of high COVID-19 infection and related isolation requirements. He offered that incentivizing voluntary vaccinations for employees could help manage these issues and he explained the proposed incentive program. He emphasized that the number of direct cases within public safety and critical infrastructure staff has had an impact and there is concern that cases could increase dramatically. City Manager Napier showed a graph of projected case numbers with and without additional City staff being vaccinated and explained possible outcomes.

Councilmember Knell asked about the new federal requirement for certain employers to mandate vaccination or weekly testing. City Manager Napier indicated that staff is waiting to see what the directives are regarding the mandate, that he is not convinced the City will fall under that program, and that he won't consider a mandate unless it is forced upon the City. Councilmember Knell said he was in opposition to the mandate and an incentive for employee vaccinations. Councilmember

Gamroth asked for an explanation of the impact on service, etc., when staff are isolated. City Manager Napier said that the basic level of service to the community is impacted any time staff are out, but any increase in illness or exposure would make it very difficult to provide basic services at even a basic level. He would like to improve the number of vaccinated staff to hopefully allow the ability of exposed staff to safely work rather than having to isolate at home as well as prevent illnesses. Councilmember Gamroth asked what Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds can be used for and if vaccinating staff would result in the most impact for these funds. City Manager Napier explained that projecting the growth of this illness is very difficult and he offered that improving employee attendance, as well as eliminating hospitalizations and death from the equation would be a good investment. He said he would like to be proactive and that likely not taking action will not serve us well. Councilmember Engebretsen shared that she would like to explore other options because the duration of this issue will be very long-term. City Manager Napier explained that efforts have been taken to educate staff, that meeting sizes have been reduced, and that other mechanisms have been utilized so vaccinations are not the only method. Councilmember Knell shared his opinions on the matter and stated that he doesn't feel the incentive can be justified. Councilmember Gamroth asked if staff absences for the seasonal flu have ever been as high as COVID absences. City Manager Napier indicated that he was not aware that the flu absences had ever been as high as the COVID absences are. Vice Mayor Pacheco emphasized that this illness is a health care crisis and not simply an inconvenience, and stated he would support the incentive.

City Manager Napier asked for direction on the vaccination incentive program. Mayor Freel expressed concern because of the absence of several Councilmembers and the new Councilmember starting this evening. City Manager Napier said Council could discuss the matter later.

Mayor Freel asked to move on to new employee introductions. City Manager Napier introduced Nicole Hatfield, Clerk of Municipal Court, and spoke of her knowledge and experience. Then he thanked Nicole Carlson, for her work as interim manager at Municipal Court. Finally, he recognized the promotion of Zulima Lopez to the role of Recreation and Public Facilities Director. Mayor Freel welcomed the new staff member and offered congratulations for the promotion.

Mayor Freel adjourned the pre-meeting at 6:20 p.m.

ATTEST:

CITY OF CASPER, WYOMING  
A Municipal Corporation

---

Christa K. Wiggs  
Assistant City Clerk

---

Steven K. Freel  
Mayor